

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

1. (Previously presented) A combination comprising:

an extensible and retractable pole assembly including an outer pole and at least one inner pole which is configured to be extensible and retractable within said outer pole; and  
a retainer assembly configured to retain said at least one inner pole within said outer pole when said at least one inner pole is retracted within said outer pole, said retainer assembly including,

a first section having first and second portions,

a second section having first and second portions, said first portions of said first and second sections capable of fastening to one another across an open end of said outer pole to retain said at least one inner pole within said outer pole, and

a third section positioned around said outer pole which is fastened to said second portions of said first and second sections.

2. (Previously presented) A combination as defined in claim 1, wherein said first, second and third sections are at least partially formed of hook and loop fastener material.

3. (Previously presented) A combination as defined in claim 1, further including a ring section connected to and positioned around said open end of said outer pole, said ring section having a pair of slots provided therethrough which are opposite one another, said first section extending through one of said slots of said ring section such that said first and second portions of said first section are provided on opposite sides of said ring section, said second section extending through the other one of said slots of said ring section such that said first and second portions of said second section are provided on opposite sides of said ring section.

4. (Withdrawn) A retainer assembly as defined in claim 1, further including a ring section integrally formed with and positioned around the open end of the outer pole, said ring section having a pair of slots provided therethrough which are opposite one another, said first section extending through one of said slots of said ring section such that said first and second portions of said first section are provided on opposite sides of said ring section, said second section extending through the other one of said slots of said ring section such that said first and second portions of said second section are provided on opposite sides of said ring section.

5. (Cancelled).

6. (New) A combination as defined in claim 1, further including a ring section positioned around said open end of said outer pole, said ring section having a pair of slots provided therethrough which are opposite one another, said first section extending through one of said slots of said ring section such that said first and second portions of said first section are provided on opposite sides of said ring section, said second section extending through the other one of said slots of said ring section such that said first and second portions of said second section are provided on opposite sides of said ring section.